

VZCZCXRO5607
OO RUEHPA
DE RUEHNV #0691/01 2710833
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 280833Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1350
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MONROVIA 000691

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/25/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KJUS](#) [EAID](#) [LI](#)
SUBJECT: FINAL, EDITED TRC REPORT TO BE RELEASED IN OCTOBER

REF: A) MONROVIA 602 B) MONROVIA 549 C) MONROVIA 487
D) MONROVIA 465 E) MONROVIA 125 F) 08
MONROVIA 1064

Classified By: Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield for reasons 1.4 (b) a
nd (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Chairman Jerome Verdier confirmed to us on September 17 that the TRC's final, edited report's release date, expected on September 1, has been pushed to at least mid-October, when 200 copies of the report will be available for government officials and international partners. Verdier blamed the delay on a late payment to the printing service in Ghana. The edited report now contains a list of dead "perpetrators," plus the names of non-Liberian mercenaries who fought in the war. A new annex also outlines the establishment of a reparation fund for victims of the civil conflict and envisions a 30 year healing process. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf remains listed for political sanction and Verdier believes she will eventually choose not to run for re-election in 2011 even though all evident points to the contrary. (Ref B) Already, Verdier claims, there is a movement afoot to sideline the report as it has been totally politicized. In a related action, Sirleaf signed a motion suspending all action on the TRC report until the final report is released. The National Legislature will likely be out of session by then. END SUMMARY.

WHERE IS THE FINAL TRC REPORT?

12. (SBU) The release of the final, edited version of the Liberian TRC's report was expected on September 1, but the date passed without incident and TRC commissioners reportedly remained out of touch in Ghana, supervising the report's printing. TRC Chairman Jerome Verdier explained in a September 17 meeting that TRC commissioners returned to Monrovia on September 11. After what Verdier calls an "unexpectedly harsh" reaction to the June 30 release of an unedited version of the TRC report, the commissioners plan to maintain low public profiles as they conclude their work. Verdier attributed the delay in the final report's release to late payment being made to the Ghana-based printer. According to Verdier, only his personal intervention on August 14 assured payment and allowed printing to move forward.

13. (SBU) The TRC, according to Verdier, has ordered 2,000 printed copies of the report, with completion expected by the end of October. The commissioners will officially "release" the final, edited report in mid-October when at least 200 copies are available for distribution to major government officials (e.g. legislators and the president) and international partners. This will be accompanied by an official TRC statement and the Commission will then consider its mandate complete.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE FINAL VERSION

¶4. (SBU) Verdier told poloff that few substantive changes had been made to the final report beyond statistical and grammatical error corrections. Principal differences from the unedited version include a listing of 50 dead "perpetrators," as well as the recognition of non-Liberian "mercenaries" who fought in the war. Overall, Verdier said, of 7,000 names in 8,000 documents, fewer than 300 persons were recommended for prosecution by the TRC. Two names were added to the 50 listed for political sanction: Wilfred Clark, a former National Security Agency (NSA) political director, and Edward Massaquoi, an administration head at the NSA in the 1980s. For this group, the report recommends that those appointed to political office should resign immediately, while elected officials should complete their electoral terms, but that all be barred from politics for 30 years.

¶5. (SBU) The final report also includes a new annex recommending the establishment of a reparation fund for victims, at an estimated cost of USD 400 million over 30 years. This new segment identifies potential funding sources and advises that initial funding be spent on those with immediate medical needs. The new annex also urges that free education be guaranteed by the GOL for at least 30 years to ensure an increase in the country's literacy level. According to Verdier, the 30 year window frequently cited in the report represents Liberia's 30 year "cycle of conflict," beginning with Samuel Doe's 1980 coup and concluding with the publication of the TRC's report. In the TRC's view, this same amount of time will be needed for a new generation

MONROVIA 00000691 002 OF 002

untouched by conflict to assume control of a "restored" Liberia.

SIRLEAF REMAINS ON THE POLITICAL SANCTION LIST

¶6. (SBU) President Sirleaf remains among those listed for political sanction in the final report. Verdier foresees Sirleaf continuing to indicate that she will run for re-election in the near term, but finally deciding to retire and not enter an election carrying the "baggage" of being listed for political sanction. The president, said Verdier, has more to gain in retiring and continuing in public life as a senior statesman than fighting a tough re-election bid. A possible "out" for Sirleaf is the constitutional provision requiring a presidential candidate to be resident in-country for 10 years before an election. This residency requirement was suspended under the 2004 reform law passed by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly for the 2005 election. The Legislature is now drafting constitutional measures that could permanently remove this requirement, but this change would need to be approved in a national referendum. (Septel) Failure to make this change would technically exclude Sirleaf from the ballot in 2011 as she will still lack 10 years of residency in Liberia by election day.

SENATE BY-ELECTION A FIRST TEST

¶7. (C) Verdier suspects there is a scheme afoot by some government officials and legislators listed in the report to downplay the final document and finally shelve it with no action. He claimed that TRC opponents are planning a mass rally in support of Liberians' right to choose their elected officials and 500,000 t-shirts have been purchased for this purpose. In Verdier's view, the November 10 by-election for the empty Montserrado county senate seat will be a first test of for the TRC process and the National Elections Commission should prevent any person disqualified by the TRC's recommendations from running for public office. (NOTE. So far, no one listed in the TRC report has publicly indicated

his or her intention to run for the vacant seat. END NOTE.)

GOVERNMENT REACTION TO THE REPORT ON HOLD...FOR NOW

18. (SBU) Meanwhile, President Sirleaf signed a legislative resolution on September 17 to suspend all action on the TRC report until the final, edited report is released. Sirleaf also took the opportunity to reiterate her willingness to work with the Liberia Council of Churches (LCC) in an LCC-led process of dialogue that will lead to true national reconciliation despite the fact that legislation which established the TRC mandates the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC) to oversee and ensure execution of the TRC's final recommendations. The President has, however, forwarded the names of the INHRC commissioner nominees to the Senate for approval. (Ref A)

19. (C) COMMENT: Verdier's excuse for the postponed release of the edited TRC report is suspect as the delay appeared to lengthen each time the Legislature extended its present session. The TRC commissioners' plan to maintain a low profile in coming weeks is proof that they expect a second wave of politically-charged shocks (similar to those that followed the unedited reports release on June 30) to accompany the edited document's October release. The report itself and the work of the TRC has proven divisive. Rather than promote reconciliation, it re-opened old wounds and threatened the country's stability. From the beginning, the process employed by TRC commissioners appeared to focus heavily on forcing acknowledgment of complicity from sitting politicians. Political and personal views differed greatly among the commissioners and two did not sign off on the final report. The September 17 resolution signed by Sirleaf is proof that the government has no plans to react immediately to the report's recommendation, but instead will allow the discussion to continue (and possible even taper out) through the fall. Overall, there lacks a sense among Liberians that the TRC process was a first step in healing the country. A national recovery will be further delayed or averted if the INHRC chooses to strictly press for implementation of TRC recommendations that lead to drawn out, high profile criminal tribunals. Involvement of civil society will be key to keeping Liberia on a firm track of reconciliation.

THOMAS-GREENFIELD